

Description

POLARIZED LIGHT SOURCE SYSTEM AND LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY USING THE SAME

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention concerns light source systems, and more specifically a polarized light source system with a pair of prism plates and a liquid crystal display (LCD) using the same.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

[0002] Most users of portable devices such as laptop and notebook computers, mobile phones and game devices expect the viewing screens thereof to be large, clear and bright. Performance equal to that of cathode-ray tube (CRT) desktop monitors is desired. LCDs are one type of flat panel display (FPD) which can satisfy these expectations. However, because liquid crystals are not self-luminescent,

LCDs need an illuminator which offers sufficient luminance (brightness) for a planar surface.

[0003] Referring to FIG. 4, a conventional LCD 10 comprises a backlight system 12, a thin film transistor (TFT) substrate 14, a color filter substrate 16, liquid molecules 18 between the substrates 14, 16, and a pair of polarizers 19, 19' having optical axes perpendicular to each other. The backlight system 12 includes a light guide plate 122, a light source 124, and a light source reflector 126. Light emitted from the light source 124 enters a side of the light guide plate 122 and emits uniformly from a top surface of the light guide plate 122.

[0004] The light emitted from the light source 124 consists of p-polarized and s-polarized light. In operation, the light is transported by light guide plate 122 into the polarizer 19. The polarizer 19 allows only one kind of p-polarized light polarized along an optical axis thereof to pass therethrough. Generally, at least 50% of the light is lost at the polarizer 19. The p-polarized light passes through the TFT substrate 14, liquid molecules 18 and the color filter substrate 16 in turn, with the result that no more than 20% of the light emitted from the light source 124 is used. That is, the efficiency of use of the light source 124 is no

more than 20%.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

- [0005] Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a polarized light source system which efficiently utilizes the light energy of a light source.
- [0006] Another object of the present invention is to provide a liquid crystal display using a polarized light source system which efficiently utilizes the light energy of a light source.
- [0007] To achieve the above objects, a polarized light source system comprises a light guide plate, a light source, a lamp cover, a quarter wave plate, an upward prism plate and a downward prism plate. The light guide plate defines an optical inputting surface, and an optical outputting surface interconnecting therewith. The light source is stationed next to the optical inputting surface. The lamp cover couples optical beams from the light source entering the light guide plate. The upward prism plate stationed next to the optical outputting surface defines a plurality of upward micro-prisms on a surface opposite thereto. The downward prism plate stationed next to the upward prism plate comprises a brightness enhancing film and a plurality of downward micro-prisms on a surface facing the upward prism plate. The upward and

downward micro-prisms are optically engaged with each other. The quarter wave plate comprises a reflective film on a backing surface thereof.

[0008] These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description and claims, and from the accompanying drawings in which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a schematic, cross-sectional view of a polarized light source system constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 2 is a schematic, cross-sectional view of a liquid crystal display constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, which uses the polarized light source of FIG. 1;

[0011] FIG. 3 is a light path diagram of light passing through a refractive medium into another refractive medium; and

[0012] FIG. 4 is a schematic, cross-sectional view of a conventional LCD.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] For facilitating understanding, like components are designated by like reference numerals throughout the various

embodiments of the invention as shown in the various drawing figures.

[0014] Reference will now be made to the drawing figures to describe the present invention in detail.

[0015] Referring to FIG. 1, a polarized light source system 20 of the present invention comprises a light guide plate 22 made of a transparent material, a light source 24, a lamp cover 25 having an inner surface coated with a reflective film, a quarter wave plate 23, an upward prism plate 26 and a downward prism plate 28. The quarter wave plate 23, the light guide plate 22, the upward prism plate 26, and downward prism plate 28 are stacked contiguously in that order from bottom to top. The light guide plate 22 defines an optical input surface 221 and an adjoining optical output surface 222. The light source 24 is stationed next to the optical input surface 221. The lamp cover 25 couples optical beams from the light source 24 entering into the light guide plate 22. The quarter wave plate 23 comprises a reflective film (not labeled) on a backing surface 232 thereof.

[0016] The light guide plate 22 is a substantially rectangular plane plate, and comprises the optical input surface 221 adjacent to the light source 24, the optical output surface

222, a bottom surface 223, and three side surfaces 224. A plurality of reflective dot-patterns (not shown) are formed on or applied to the bottom surface 223, to promote uniform emission of light from the optical output surface 222. Further, to improve optical efficiency, reflective sheets or films can be secured on the bottom surface 223 and the side surfaces 224.

[0017] The upward prism plate 26 defines a plurality of uniform upward micro-prisms 262 on a surface thereof opposite from the light guide plate 22. The downward prism plate 28 includes a brightness enhancing film 284, and a plurality of downward micro-prism 282 integral with the brightness enhancing film 284. The upward micro-prisms 262 substantially mesh with the downward micro-prism 282, but leaving a gap 29 therebetween. A length of each micro-prism 262, 282 is preferably between 450 micrometers and 550 micrometers, and a height thereof is preferably between 200 micrometers and 250 micrometers. However, when a size of the light guide plate 22 is changed, the heights and lengths of the micro-prisms 262, 282 may be changed accordingly.

[0018] Referring to FIG. 2, a liquid crystal display 30 using the polarized light source 20 comprises a liquid crystal panel

31 stationed adjacent to the downward prism plate 28 of the light guide plate 20. The liquid crystal panel 31 comprises a TFT substrate 32, a color filter substrate 33, liquid crystal molecules 34 between the substrates 32, 33, and polarizers 35', 35 having optical axes perpendicular to each other.

[0019] Referring to FIG. 3, when light passes from a medium with refractive index n_0 into another medium with refractive index n_1 , reflective and refractive phenomenon occur at the interface of the media. Supposing an incident angle θ_0 , a refractive angle θ_1 , a refractive index of an incident medium n_0 , a refractive index of a emitting medium n_1 , a p-polarized light energy rate of reflected light R_p , and an s-polarized light energy rate of reflected light R_s , then R_p and R_s can be described as follows:

[0020]
$$R_p = \{n_1/\cos\theta_0 - n_0/\cos\theta_1\}^2 / \{n_1/\cos\theta_0 + n_0/\cos\theta_1\}^2$$

[0021]
$$R_s = \{n_0/\cos\theta_0 - n_1/\cos\theta_1\}^2 / \{n_0/\cos\theta_0 + n_1/\cos\theta_1\}^2$$

[0022] As seen from these formulas, with an increase in the incident angle θ_0 , R_s increases gradually. However, R_p decreases to zero at a specific angle θ_B which is called Brewster's angle. θ_B can be expressed as follows:

[0023]
$$\theta_B = \tan^{-1} n_0/n_1$$

[0024] When the incident angle of the light is at a Brewster's angle θ_B , the reflected light is entirely s-polarized light, and the refractive light will be combined with nearly 92% p-polarized light and 8% s-polarized light.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, in order to let light reach the upward micro-prisms 262 at a Brewster's angle, the apex angles of the upward and downward micro-prisms 262, 282 are not only matched with each other, but also configured in the range from 125° to 145° , preferably 135° . Further, a difference of the each of the refractive indices of the prism plates 26, 28 and the gap 29 is in the range from 0.001 to 0.2. In operation, light consisting of p-polarized and s-polarized light comes from the optical output surface 222 of the light guide plate 22 and reaches the upward micro-prisms 262 at a Brewster's angle. The reflected light is entirely s-polarized light, and the refractive light are combined with p-polarized light and s-polarized light. Then the combined refractive light reaches the downward micro-prism 282, further, s-polarized light is reflected, and p-polarized is refracted. After that interfaces, the combined refracted light is nearly pure p-polarized light. The reflected s-polarized light is converted to p-polarized light by the quarter wave plate 23 in

the following way. The s-polarized light returns back through the light guide plate 22, enters the quarter wave plate 23, is reflected by the reflective film of the quarter wave plate 23, and passes back out from the quarter wave plate 23. Then the converted p-polarized light passes back through the light guide plate 22 and the prism plates 26, 28. The converted p-polarized light together with the aforementioned refracted p-polarized light illuminate the liquid crystal display 30. Therefore, almost all the light from the light source 24 is transmitted as p-polarized light out from the polarized light source system 20 and into the polarizer 35 of the liquid crystal panel 31. An efficiency of utilization of the light source 24 is greatly increased.

[0026] In an alternative embodiment, in the polarized light source 20, the gap 29 between the prism plates 26, 28 can be eliminated. A difference between the refractive indices of the prism plates 26, 28 is between 0.001 and 0.2. Therefore the polarized light source 20 still attains efficient utilization of the light source 24.

[0027] It is to be understood, however, that even though numerous characteristics and advantages of the present invention have been set forth in the foregoing description, to-

gether with details of the structure and function of the invention, the disclosure is illustrative only, and changes may be made in detail, especially in matters of shape, size and arrangement of parts within the principles of the invention to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.